

The war in Iraq is spiraling out of control.

... the intelligence was wrong.

... the reconstruction effort lacked planning.

... and Congressional oversight was nearly nonexistent.

No more.

A need to change course in Iraq

On November 8th, the American people signaled their desire for change, both in how their government deals with problems at home and how it conducts its foreign policy. A change of course in Iraq was one of the things the people called for most clearly.

Today, the Baker-Hamilton [Iraq Study Group](#) (ISG) echoed the call of the American people. The ISG's report called for a change in strategy to tackle the "grave and deteriorating" situation in Iraq. The panel noted that without a change of course, "a slide toward chaos could trigger the collapse of Iraq's government and a humanitarian catastrophe. Neighboring countries could intervene. Sunni-Shia clashes could spread. Al-Qaeda could win a propaganda victory and expand its base of operations."

Al-Qaeda wasn't basing operations out of Iraq before, but they are there now, and the war has become a major motivating tool for their recruitment of potential terrorists. Things are bad in Iraq right now, and they threaten to become worse if we continue the status quo.

A new mission for our troops and enhanced diplomacy

The challenge before us is to chart a new course in Iraq. The removal of Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense is an important first step toward realizing that change. During his confirmation hearings, the President's nominee for Secretary of Defense Robert Gates acknowledged that "we're not winning" in Iraq.

As part of a new strategy, the ISG has endorsed a key proposal of House and Senate Democratic leaders – to change the primary mission of US troops in Iraq from combat to training and support. This change of mission would enable the redeployment of US forces to begin.

We must also change course on the diplomatic front. While the President has said his goal is to help form an Iraqi government that can sustain and defend itself, the ISG contends that this cannot be achieved without serious cooperation from other nations in the Middle East. We must actively reach out to these nations to engage them in helping Iraq achieve long-term security and political reconciliation.

A shift to bipartisan collaboration

The ISG urges bipartisan cooperation in order to enable success, noting that its recommendations demand a tremendous amount of political will and cooperation between the legislative and executive branches. The report concludes that "Foreign policy is doomed to failure – as is any action in Iraq – if not supported by broad, sustained consensus." Democrats stand ready to work with President Bush to find a way to end the war as quickly as possible.

America's elected leadership needs to come together to put the interests of our soldiers abroad, and our families here at home, above the disagreements we have had in the past.

We need a new direction - what do you think?

What's next for Iraq?

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I have been receiving briefings from political and diplomatic experts, and will continue studying the ISG recommendations as I work with my colleagues to address this issue. In addition, considering the thoughts and views of constituents is a vital part of my decision-making process and [I encourage you to write in with your thoughts on Iraq](#) .